Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Friday, March 25, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TREASURES OF THE SEA." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I'm going to talk about fish and shellfish -- the real treasures of the sea from the viewpoint of the cook. These sea foods have more practical value than all the shiploads of gold ever found in Davy Jones's locker. And to a hungry man the most exquisite coral on earth is nothing compared to a fish steak -- hot off the broiler.

There is something about fishing that fascinates most men. You've noticed how young Johnny loses all interest in spading up the garden as soon as he has a good collection of bait. Or how a tired man can relax in the most strenuous way -- wading up and down a stream trying to outguess a mountain trout.

Most women never know the thrill that comes with landing an 8-pound bass. But personally, I've always thought it just as much of a sport to cook a fish as it is to hook him. For it's something of an art to transform these finny or shelled creatures into appetizing, nourishing dishes -- broiled halibut steaks -- shrimp cocktails -- salmon salads -- or scalloped crab meat.

However, any woman who cooks fish must be something of a fisherman. For probably she'll have to get her fish from the market. And shopping for fish has always been a game in itself.

You've probably noticed that in recent years it has become easier to get fish of good quality. Of course the biggest reason for this is that we have more and better ways of preserving fish nowadays. We are able to get fish that's been quick-frozen -- fish that's been smoked -- pickled fish -- canned fish -- and fish put up by other new and improved methods of preserving.

But another reason for the better quality fish we get today is the increasing amount of government protection for the fish buyer. Many State and municipal governments have inspectors who watch shipments of fresh sea food. They see to it that fish are preserved under sanitary conditions -- that oyster beds are clean and healthful.

For the most part, the federal government watches only the fish that pass into interstate commerce. Federal inspectors see to it that imported fish or fish that cross State boundaries are pure and wholesome. And for the past three years they have been doing even more in the case of shrimp.

No doubt you've noticed lately that most cans of shrimp bear a label which reads "Production Supervised by U. S. Food and Drug Administration." Behind that label is this story.

In 1934, the shrimp canners asked for an amendment to the Federal Food and Drug Act that would allow them to have Government inspectors supervise every step in the canning of shrimp. They got the amendment and the supervision.

Last year over nine-tenths of the shrimp canners asked for this inspection. They have found that shrimp is becoming more popular because it is consistently good. And canners with this federal supervision aren't worried about having their food taken off the market, because they know it is pure and wholesome.

But Government supervision never will solve all our fish shopping problems. We can do a lot to help ourselves by keeping our eyes open -- reading labels intelligently. There's a lot of information on a good label.

Take salmon for instance. We'll take salmon because we have more of it canned in our country than of any other fish. Some place on every canned salmon label is a statement of quantity. Right there in net ounces is a true statement of the amount of salmon in the can.

The salmon label also usually gives us a clue to quality. This clue is the word that describes the species of the salmon. This may be one of five kinds. I'll name them in order -- the most expensive first -- the least expensive last. There they are -- Chinook -- King -- Coho -- Pink -- Chum. All these vary in color and flavor as well as in price. Some have a deeper color, a firmer flesh, a richer flavor. But all are wholesome and good to eat.

Two other popular canned fish are tuna and sardines. The label on tuna tells whether the contents are white -- light -- or Tonno. White meat tuna is scarce and expensive. Light meat tuna is the kind you find most of on the market. And "Tonno" simply means that the fish has been put up Italian style by packing it in olive oil.

Sardine labels state whether olive oil, salad oil, tomato sauce, or mustard sauce have been used in packing the fish.

And now just a final word about the food value of fish and shellfish. Mainly it is that they are a good source of efficient protein. And salt water fish and shellfish are our most dependable source of iodine in the diet. Oysters are an excellent source of iron.

We do not have the complete story of the vitamin content of fish because research hasn't been done for all the different kinds. However, we do know that sardines, salmon, and herring are good sources of vitamin D, and that salmon are good for vitamin A as well. Oysters are good for both vitamins A and B, and fish roe contains these same two vitamins.

****